

City Sleuth Citation

Annual awards on the landscape and cityscape

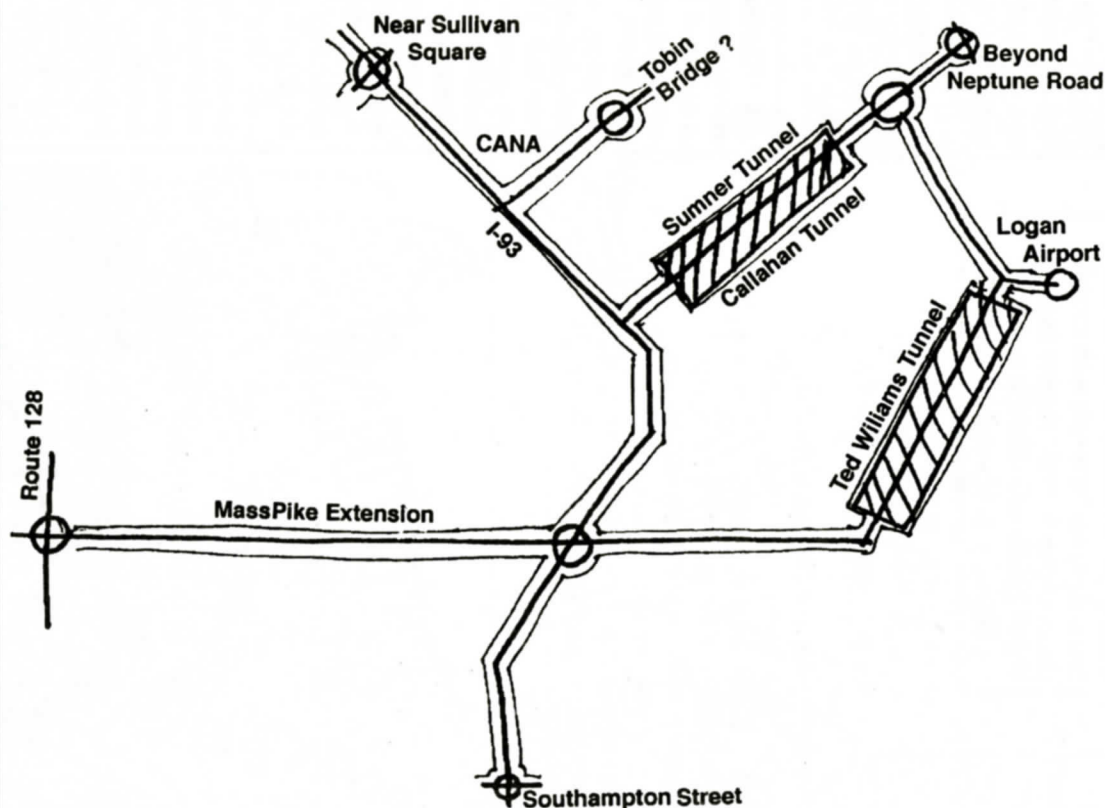
THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 29

The newsletter for people who care about Boston

January-February 1997

Metropolitan Highway System



"A unified transportation system in the metropolitan Boston area..." Diagram shows the elements of the Metropolitan Highway System (MHS) as presented in legislation filed by the Weld Administration.

Inspired by the Federal Highway Administration's insistence that the Commonwealth prepare a sound plan to finance its share of the Central Artery/Tunnel project by April 1, 1997, the legislation is declared an emergency law to take effect immediately upon passage.

Source: Joint feasibility study regarding the Metropolitan Highway System

Boston Informer Predicts for '97!

- The Boston Landmark Commission will declare the elevated Central Artery a historic landmark and cannot be torn down.
- The ninth publicly funded feasibility study of a convention center in Boston is proposed at a cost to the taxpayers of \$10 million.
- Now that former Maine Senator William Cohen is Secretary of Defense, connecting Portland, Maine, to Washington, D.C., will again become the rationale for the North Station to South Station Rail Link.
- South Boston builds world-class soccer stadium.
- Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles hires John Silber to implement new rigorous drivers license testing.
- After implementing a new policy of opening rear doors on buses, the MBTA announces it will consider studying, for a trial period, having buses pull to the curb at stops.

Following a consultant study on the feasibility of the Metropolitan Highway System (MHS) financing the state portion of the Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) costs from increased tolls, the Weld Administration has submitted a bill to the legislature. It proposes the MHS consist of the portion of the MassPike east of Route 128, all of the CA/T project including the planned Charles River Bridges and the Ted Williams Tunnel, the Central Artery North Area ramps connecting I-93 to the Tobin Bridge and the Sumner and Callahan tunnels. The Tobin Bridge may or may not be included (now that Massport Director Stephen Tocco is gone).

All of the MHS will be owned, operated, maintained and financed by the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, which will have the power to set tolls "as it sees fit." The consultants, Commonwealth Capital Partners Inc. and Apogee Research Inc., recommend tolls be at least doubled on the MassPike east of Route 128, the three tunnels and the Tobin Bridge to provide the funds to pay the state's share of construction and operating costs of the CA/T project. The consultants also recommend that Massport buy from the Mass. Highway Department the CA/T project roads providing access to Logan Airport and contribute \$200 million toward the cost of designing and constructing these roads.

Designating MassPike as MHS operator makes sense given the high CA/T costs facing the state. Rather than establish a new authority, the legislation sees the value of powers in the existing Turnpike Act, such as exemption from zoning and most important, the ability to issue bonds.

People Movers

Paul McCann has become interim BRA/EDIC director.

Bob O'Brien, from Downtown North Assn. to McDermott/O'Neill & Assoc.

Scott Payette, from Payette Associates architects, to Cecil & Rizvi architects and planners.

Sherm Eidelman, Mass. Highway Dept. District 4 Engineer, has retired.

Patricia Leavenworth is the new Mass. Highway Dept. District 4 Engineer.

Herb Nolan, from National Park Service, to Goody, Clancy Associates.

David Peters, from URS Greiner, to HDR Engineering.

Tom McGarrigle, from Ammann & Whitney engineers, to Spaulding & Slye.

Shirin Karanfiloglu, from Central Artery/Tunnel manager of architecture and urban design, to MassPike Planning and Development.

Laurinda Bedingfield, former Mass. Highway Department (MHD) commissioner, has returned to MHD.

Valerie Barsom, former state representative from Wilbraham, is the MassPike associate counsel/legislative liaison.

① The Marriott Vacation Club International and the Beal Cos. are moving along in the redevelopment of the **Custom House Tower** into 80 time-share one-bedroom condominiums, each about 600 s.f. The price for one week ranges from \$12,900 to \$16,900. A museum on the ground floor and the top observation deck will be open to the public. The developer's unusual sales pitch stated in a newspaper advertisement that the promotion is designed for people with annual incomes of over \$80,000, requires attendance at a 90-minute presentation to qualify.

Occupancy is expected in July 1997.

② To justify building a **pedestrian bridge over Congress Street at City Hall**, the Public Facilities Dept. released a transportation study by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. (VHB). Conclusion: Congress Street from State to North streets is heavily used by pedestrians and that "several safety deficiencies exist and that safety improvements are warranted."

The report recommends building the proposed pedestrian bridge over Congress Street from City Hall Plaza to the vicinity of Fanueil Hall. No major alternative to the bridge, such as redesign of Congress Street and intersections, was considered.

The original rationale for the bridge—air quality improvement by keeping cars moving—was found not to be a significant factor. For more information call Susan Meyers, Public Facilities Dept., 635-3401.

③ The **Boston Boulevard Project** continues to march along despite criticism from a variety of groups that the "boulevard" concept is vague and the project's goals are moving targets.

To date, two of the 12 "boulevards" have been designed, and Brighton Avenue has been built. Yet, although seven other streets are currently between 25 percent and 75 percent design, (Cambridge, Tremont, Merrimac, and Allston's Washington streets, Commonwealth, Huntington and Massachusetts avenues), the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and Public Works Department are still developing design guidelines for all the boulevards.

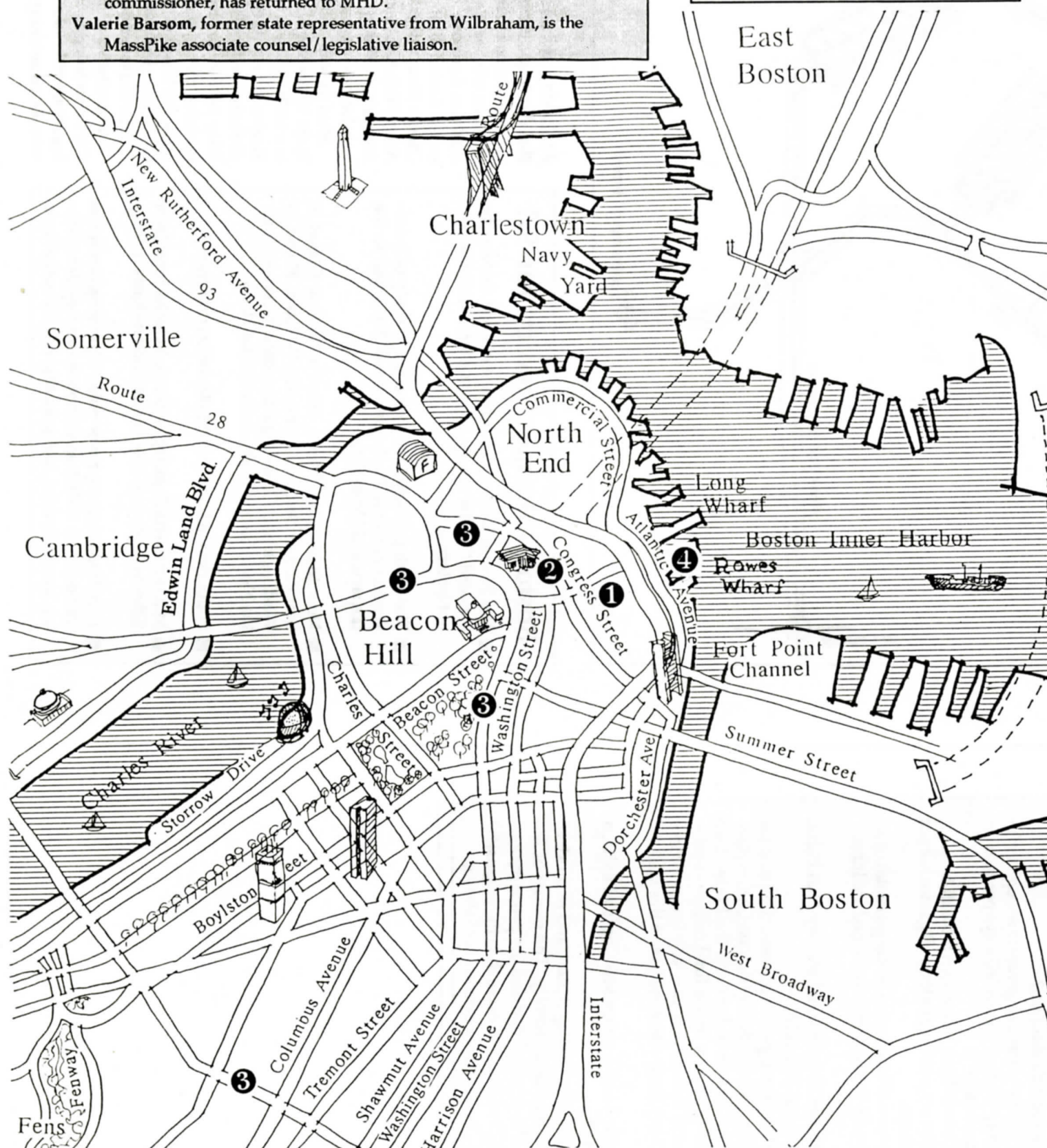
As a result of the somewhat undefined mission of the boulevard project, pedestrian and bicycle advocates, abutters and professional design organizations have enlivened normally moribund mandatory design public hearings held for these boulevard projects.

Call Nathalie Beauvais at the BRA, 722-4300 x4323, for information on the Boston Boulevard Project.

④ Chicago developer Samuel Zell (Equity Office Properties Inc.) who bought the 1960s-era office tower at 28 State Street (600,000 s.f.) and is now renovating it completely, recently bought the 1,375-space **Aquarium Parking Garage** on Atlantic Avenue between East India Row and Milk Street. The \$55 million price, \$40,000 per parking space, is considered high by some local sources.

Separately, but in the same neighborhood, Nynex sold its building at 245 State Street to Fidelity Investments for \$27 million.

CORRECTION: Contact **Cynthia Barr** at the Boston Redevelopment Authority at 722-4300 ext. 4318 for information on the new Boston Zoning Amendment Article 80.



A Notice of Project Change (NPC) submitted to the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs by the Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project proposes a major **change in the way the new exit ramps will be ventilated**. Instead of full transverse ventilation systems (air supplied and exhaust removed along the length of the tunnel), certain exit ramps north of Causeway Street and at parcels 6, 12 and 18 in the downtown will be ventilated by a low, steady longitudinal supply of air from jet fans. Most ventilation will be provided by the exiting vehicles expelling the contaminated air ahead of them creating "the piston effect."

The proposed changes would save construction and operating costs by permitting lower horsepower fan motors to be used in ventilation buildings, reducing some ducting and eliminating the exhaust stacks from Vent Building 8 near North Station. The NPC states that the jet-fan system will still meet air quality standards.

North End and Waterfront abutters have criticized the proposal, saying that the system won't work when traffic jams. They question whether air quality standards can be met when traffic stalls and cars are not operating as pistons.

The **Boston Common Frog Pond** will soon reopen, thanks to a multi-million restoration project undertaken by the Boston Parks and Recreation Department.

The comprehensive renovation program incorporates four-season amenities that fit into the Boston Common's historic context. The seasonal improvements include a reflecting pool and plume fountain display for spring, summer and fall, a children's spray pool for summer, and a skating rink for winter.

The Frog Pond, one of three ponds originally found on the Common in the mid-1630s, was built on the site of a marshy pool. In 1826, the Frog Pond was curbed to create a miniature lake, and in 1848 a fountain with a jet of water 90 feet high was added. An extravagant inauguration of Boston's public water system was celebrated at the Frog Pond that year.



Source: John Copley and Associates/Lynn Wolf Associates landscape architects

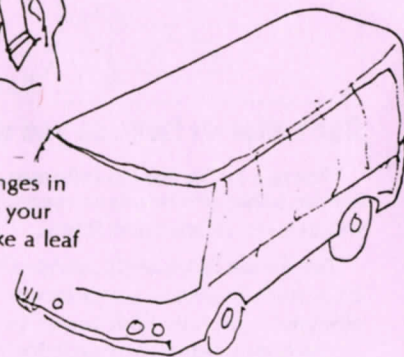
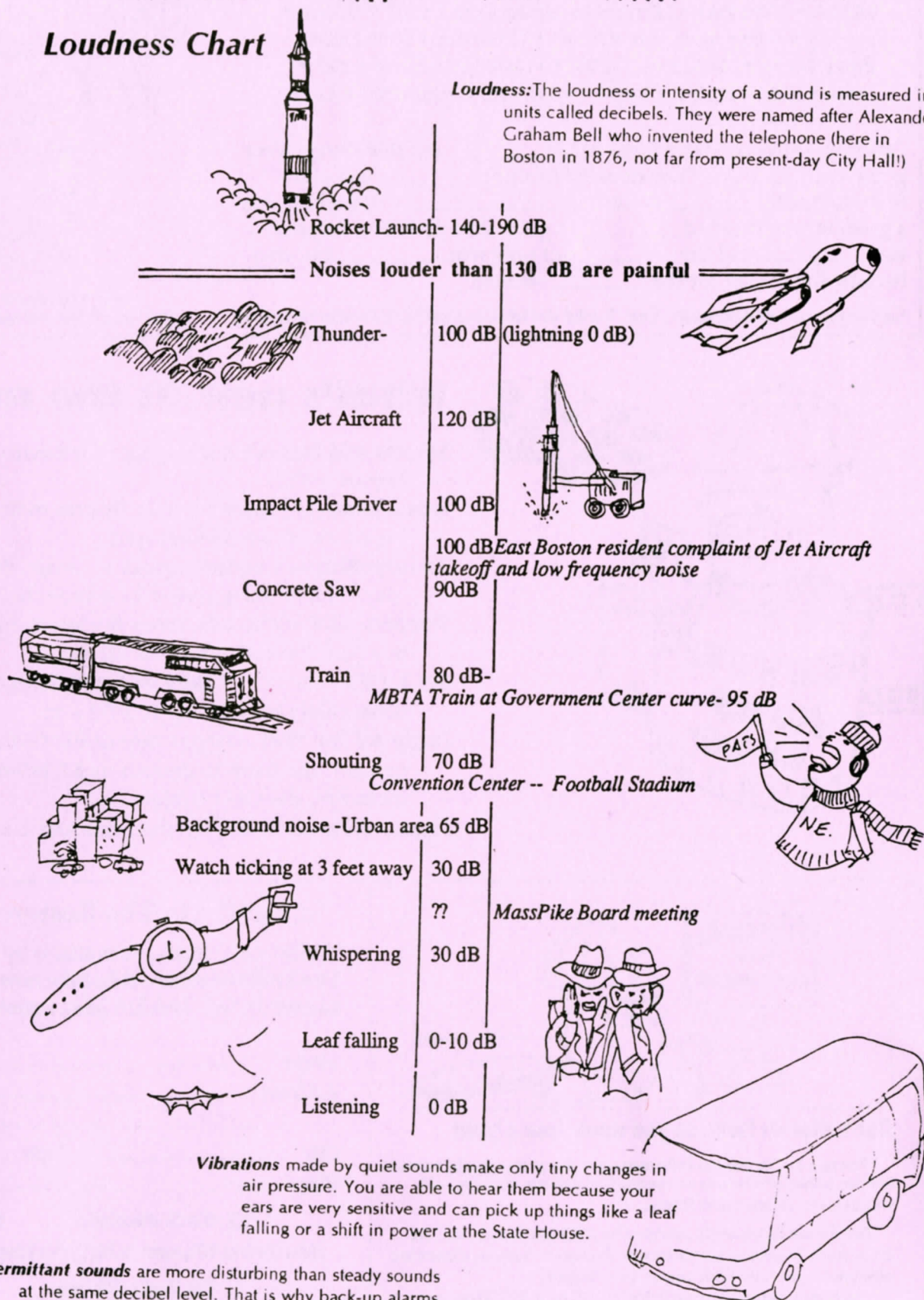
A page from **The Boston Informer's** big "Missing in Action" notebook (or, whatever happened to...?):

- MBTA Clarendon Plaza reconstruction at Back Bay station;
- Boston Transportation Master Plan (we hear the final report is available...);
- Follow-up on City of Boston/MBTA meetings held in October to present South End Washington Street transit and streetscape alternatives;
- Battery Wharf development;
- Boston Transportation Department Bicycle Advisory Committee;
- Public review of City Hall Plaza redesign ideas;
- Commonwealth's Long-Range Transportation Plan;
- Jamaica Plain parking enforcement (began in summer 1996);
- Lafayette Place renovation;
- Merrimac Street reconstruction;
- Stay tuned.

NOISE

Loudness Chart

Loudness: The loudness or intensity of a sound is measured in units called decibels. They were named after Alexander Graham Bell who invented the telephone (here in Boston in 1876, not far from present-day City Hall!)



What's Missing?

Fill in the blanks with these words or your own.

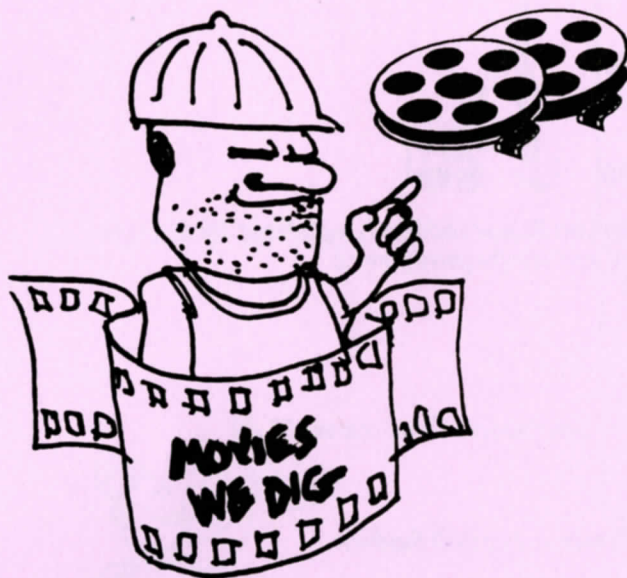
MBTA • MassPike • air rights • Urban Ring • fired • slowly • rapidly • well • smoothly • lunch • Governor • State House • Barry Locke • stadium • shuttle • Washington Street • sad • noise • little • happy • Inspector General • promoted • Disney

One day, the people in charge of the _____ felt that things were going too _____. They decided to study _____ and allow them to finish _____ before _____. _____ thought it was a great idea and called _____ to get it started. Soon everyone was _____ and the _____ not only was _____, but also became the reason for the _____ success.

Send us your completed paragraph. Best (?) entry wins fabulous prize! (Winner's name kept secret.)



Montgolfier's hot air balloon, 1783
The world's first practical balloon rose 1,500 feet



What's new at the movies?

Secrets and Lies—A training film for Environmental Impact Report writers.

Space Jam—The drama of two Boston motorists converging on the same parking spot.

Trainspotting—A mystery about a mirage that appears sporadically along Green Line branches

Sleepers—An idyllic tale about Boston residents who don't live near Central Artery construction

Set it Off—The horror story of a bulldozer operator who deliberately backs it up at 3:00 a.m.

Jingle All the Way—Happy tale of Bechtel's treasurer going to the bank to deposit its \$1 billion fee for managing the CAT project

Hype—A documentary on the proposed convention center.

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QUALIFICATIONS

1. Lose election
2. Pick right political party
3. Perfect your timing
4. Perfect your whine
5. Stay awake at meetings
6. Have no relevant experience

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How to get a good government job

THE BOSTON INFORMER

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You were asking...

- Q. People who want light rail on Washington Street in the South End say the state promised light rail. Is this true?**
- A.** No. The Executive Office of Transportation and Construction in 1974 made a formal commitment to provide "a replacement service through the South End to Dudley Station" for the elevated Orange Line once it was relocated to the Southwest Corridor. The state committed to study a number of options, including surface buses and light rail, and never promised the service would be equal to or better than the Orange Line.
- Q. Why do South Boston residents prefer a convention center over a football stadium?**
- A.**
1. A football stadium does not generate enough traffic (it's used only 10 days versus 365 days per year for convention center)
 2. Conventioneers drink more than football fans.
 3. South Boston residents go to football games but not to conventions.
 4. A publicly owned convention center generates more patronage jobs than a privately owned stadium.
- Q. I read something about a hotel on City Hall Plaza. Isn't the Plaza public land?**
- A.** Yes. But with minimal public process, the Trust for City Hall Plaza, spearheaded by Beacon Cos., is planning to build a 350-room hotel on the Plaza. Two development teams are in the final competition—Intercontinental Hotels/Beal Cos. and Interstate Hotels/Carpenter. Construction may start this year.
- Q. What happened to the proposed Copley Pavilion movie theater?**
- A.** Real estate values in Copley Square and in much of Boston have increased recently. The owner of the Dartmouth Street parcel decided the property was worth \$2 million–\$5 million more than the original \$9 million price. The developer decided not to buy it.